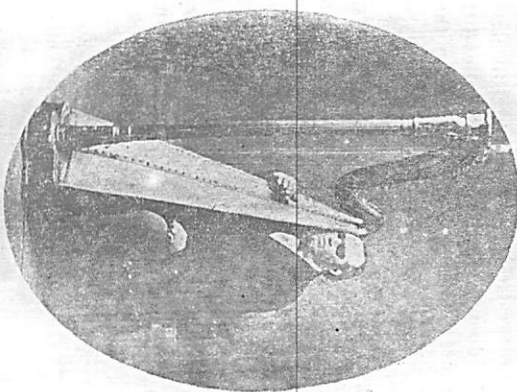


GILES, Thomas Davis, popularly known as "Utah's blind harpist", was



Born Nov. 28, 1820, at Blau, Avon, South Wales, the son of Thos. Giles and Maria Davis. He was one of the
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early converts to "Mormonism" in Wales, and soon after his baptism in 1844, he became a zealous worker in the Church. After laboring in different capacities he became president of the Welsh conference. At a meeting of saints held in Bro. Giles' native town, in 1848, a member of the Church arose and spoke in an unknown tongue, prophesying that something of a very serious nature would shortly happen to some of the leaders of the Church in Wales. A spirit of dread took possession of the little branch, as it was feared that the calamity predicted would come through mob violence, and as a precaution the Elders of the Church from that time ceased going out to labor singly as missionaries. The prediction sure enough came to pass, Bro. Giles being the victim. One day, while working at his trade, digging coal in a mine, a large piece of coal fell on him, striking him on the head and inflicting a wound nine inches long, rendering him totally blind. The injured man was carried to his home and medical aid hastily summoned. The doctor then bound up the wound in Bro. Giles's head and rendered him other assistance. In taking his leave, the doctor said he did not believe the injured man would live longer than twenty-four hours. News of the sad accident was carried to two Elders of the Church, who hastened to the bedside of their unfortunate brother, whom they anointed with oil, and then prayed for his recovery. He was promised that he would get well and even if he would never see again, he would live to do much good in the Church. A month later he was out traveling through the country attending to his ecclesiastical duties. In the spring of 1856 Bro. Giles received word that he and his family could emigrate to Zion. They crossed the Atlantic in the ship "Samuel Curling", which sailed from Liverpool, England, April 19, 1856. Before leaving Wales the saints there presented Bro. Giles with a splendid harp which he learned to play skillfully. While crossing the plains he lost his wife and two children by death. His sorrow was great and his heart almost broken, but his faith did not fail him. In the midst of his grief he said as did one of old, "The Lord giveth, and the Lord taketh away; blessed be the name of the Lord". At Council Bluffs he joined a handcart company and started again for the Valley. Though blind he pulled a handcart from Council Bluffs to Salt Lake City, Bro. Alfred Reese, who pulled the handcart with him, leading the way. At a certain stage of the journey Bro. Giles became very ill and being unable to keep up with the company, he and his partner were left behind for a day or so, until Apostle Parley P. Pratt came along and administered to Bro. Giles; under the powerful administration of Apostle Pratt, he was miraculously healed, and reached the City of the Saints in safety. Pres. Brigham Young had in his possession at that time a valuable harp, the use of which he feelingly tendered Bro. Giles. In due course of time Bro. Giles's own harp arrived, and then, carrying a letter of introduction from Pres. Young to the Bishops, Bro. Giles traveled from settlement to settlement in Utah, giving concerts and gladdening the hearts of the people with his sweet music. This was his avocation for many years. "In 1895 (Nov. 2nd) the harp of the old blind musician was hung up on the willows! Bro. Giles, its owner, was dead."